IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with <u>underlining</u> and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please AMEND claims 1, 12, 13 and 14 in accordance with the following:

1. (currently amended) A communication assistance process performed by a communication assistance device connected to a plurality of user terminals <u>in a conference system</u>, the communication assistance process comprising ~~the steps of~~:

receiving communication data transmitted from the plurality of user terminals;

acquiring assistance data that serves to assist communication between the plurality of user terminals;

determining whether or not voice data is included in the received communication data;

determining whether or not voice data is included in the assistance data;

adjusting the sound volume of voice data in the assistance data if it was determined in the communication data ~~determination step~~<u>determining</u> that voice data is included in the communication data received from the plurality of user terminals, and it was determined in the assistance data ~~determination step~~<u>determining</u> that voice data is included in the assistance data; and

providing assistance data that includes sound volume adjusted voice data to the plurality of user terminals.

2. (currently amended) The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 1, further comprising ~~the steps of~~:

storing a vocabulary list; and

comparing the vocabulary list with the communication data received in the communication data receiving ~~step~~, and extracting one or more keywords included in the vocabulary list from the communication data;

wherein assistance data that is associated with the keywords extracted in the keyword ~~extraction step~~<u>extracting</u> is acquired in the assistance data ~~acquisition step~~<u>acquiring</u>.

3. (currently amended) The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 2, further comprising ~~the steps of~~:

calculating an occurrence frequency of each keyword extracted in the keyword ~~extraction step~~extracting; and

extracting keywords having a high occurrence frequency from the keywords whose occurrence frequency was calculated in the frequency ~~calculation step~~calculating;

wherein assistance data associated with the keywords having a high occurrence frequency is acquired from amongst assistance data associated with the keywords extracted in the keyword ~~extraction step~~extracting.

4. (currently amended) The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 2, further comprising ~~the step of~~ matching the keywords included in the vocabulary list with the assistance data and storing the same;

wherein the assistance data ~~acquisition step~~acquiring includes searching for and retrieving assistance data that corresponds to each keyword extracted in the keyword ~~extraction step~~extracting.

5. (currently amended) The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 1, wherein the assistance data is stored in a computer terminal which is connected to the network, and the assistance data is acquired from the computer terminal in the assistance data ~~acquisition step~~acquiring.

6. (currently amended) The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 1, wherein assistance data that includes text data and/or image data is provided to the user terminals in the assistance data ~~provision step~~providing if it was determined in the assistance data ~~determination step~~determining that the assistance data does not include voice data.

7. (currently amended) The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 1, wherein the sound volume of voice data in the communication data is measured in the communication data ~~determination step~~determining; and

the sound volume of voice data in the assistance data is adjusted in the sound volume ~~adjustment step~~adjusting in response to the measurement results of the sound volume measurement ~~step~~.

8.   (currently amended) The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 1, further comprising ~~the step of~~ conducting a first evaluation in which the degree of association between the communication data received from the plurality of user terminals and the assistance data is evaluated; and

wherein the sound volume of voice data in the assistance data to be provided to the plurality of user terminals is adjusted in the sound volume ~~adjustment step~~adjusting in response to the results of the first evaluation ~~step~~.

9.   (currently amended) The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 1, further comprising ~~the step of~~ conducting a second evaluation in which the degree of association between the communication data received from the plurality of user terminals and the assistance data is evaluated for each user terminal; and

wherein the sound volume of voice data in the assistance data for each user terminal is adjusted in the sound volume ~~adjustment step~~adjusting in response to the results of the second evaluation ~~step~~.

10.   (currently amended) The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 9, further comprising ~~the steps of~~:

storing a vocabulary list; and

comparing the vocabulary list stored in the vocabulary list ~~storage step~~storing with the communication data received in the communication data receiving ~~step~~, and extracting one or more common keywords included in the communication data from each of the plurality of user terminals and the vocabulary list;

wherein the degree of association with the assistance data is evaluated in the second evaluation ~~step~~ based upon the transmission order of the common keywords from each user terminal; and

the assistance data acquired in the assistance data ~~acquisition step~~acquiring is associated with the common keywords extracted in the common keyword ~~extraction step~~extracting.

11.   (currently amended) The communication assistance process disclosed in claim 9, further comprising ~~the steps of~~:

storing a vocabulary list; and

comparing the vocabulary list stored in the vocabulary list ~~storage step~~storing with the

communication data received in the communication data receiving ~~step~~, and extracting one or more common keywords included in the communication data from each of the plurality of user terminals and the vocabulary list; and

calculating the transmission frequency of the common keywords for each user terminal;

wherein the degree of association with the assistance data is evaluated in the second evaluation ~~step~~-based upon the transmission frequency of the common keywords; and

assistance data acquired in the assistance data ~~acquisition step~~acquiring is associated with the common keywords extracted in the common keyword ~~extraction step~~extracting.

12.   (currently amended) A communication assistance device connected to a plurality of user terminals<u> in a conference system</u>, the communication assistance device comprising:

receiving means that receives communication data transmitted from the plurality of user terminals;

assistance data acquisition means that acquires assistance data that serves to assist communication between the plurality of user terminals;

communication data determination means that determines whether or not voice data is included in the received communication data;

assistance data determination means that determines whether or not voice data is included in the assistance data;

sound volume adjustment means that adjusts the sound volume of voice data in the assistance data if it was determined in the communication data determination means that voice data is included in the communication data received from the plurality of user terminals, and it was determined in the assistance data determination means that voice data is included in the assistance data; and

assistance data provision means that provides assistance data that includes sound volume adjusted voice data to the plurality of user terminals.

13.   (currently amended) A communication assistance program that is executed by a computer connected to a plurality of user terminals<u> in a conference system</u>, the communication assistance program causing the computer to function as:

receiving means that receives communication data transmitted from the plurality of user terminals;

assistance data acquisition means that acquires assistance data that serves to assist communication between the plurality of user terminals;

communication data determination means that determines whether or not voice data is included in the received communication data;

assistance data determination means that determines whether or not voice data is included in the assistance data;

sound volume adjustment means that adjusts the sound volume of voice data in the assistance data if it was determined in the communication data determination means that voice data is included in the communication data received from the plurality of user terminals, and it was determined in the assistance data determination means that voice data is included in the assistance data; and

assistance data provision means that provides assistance data that includes sound volume adjusted voice data to the plurality of user terminals.

14.   (currently amended) A computer readable storage medium on which is stored a communication assistance program that is executed on a computer connected to a plurality of user terminals via a network in a conference system, the program executing the steps of:

receiving communication data transmitted from the plurality of user terminals;

acquiring assistance data that serves to assist communication between the plurality of user terminals;

determining whether or not voice data is included in the received communication data;

determining whether or not voice data is included in the assistance data;

adjusting the sound volume of voice data in the assistance data if it was determined in the communication data determination stepdetermining that voice data is included in the communication data received from the plurality of user terminals, and it was determined in the assistance data determination stepdetermining that voice data is included in the assistance data; and

providing assistance data that includes sound volume adjusted voice data to the plurality of user terminals.

15.   (new) A communication assistance device connected to a plurality of user terminals in a conference system, the communication assistance device comprising:

a controller

receiving communication data transmitted from the plurality of user terminals,

acquiring assistance data that serves to assist communication between the plurality of user terminals,

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determining whether voice data is included in the received communication data,

determining whether voice data is included in the assistance data,

adjusting sound volume of voice data in the assistance data if it was determined that voice data is included in the communication data received from the plurality of user terminals, and it was determined that voice data is included in the assistance data, and

providing assistance data that includes sound volume adjusted voice data to the plurality of user terminals.